

NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

2014-2015 STATEMENT OF MANDATE

APRIL 2014

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1. Message from the Minister and the Director and CEO

We are pleased to present the 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (NSHRC). This plan sets out our strategic direction for the fiscal year.

We continue to be committed to helping build inclusive communities and to protecting and promoting human rights in Nova Scotia. An important part of that is establishing respectful relationships with equity seekers, government, stakeholders, academics and the general public.

In 2014-2015, we will enhance dispute resolution processes introduced in 2012. Positive results from these changes are being experienced by the people who engage in the process including dramatically improved timelines, flexibility and transparency, all of which benefit Nova Scotians. We want to review and evaluate all dispute resolution processes this coming year to ensure they are as efficient and effective as possible.

Applying restorative principles to the work we do is another area of focus. This has already resulted in cost savings and faster resolution for the parties, as well as reduced government spending.

This past year also saw the introduction of ground breaking work to identify and understand how many disadvantaged Nova Scotians experience discrimination in simple day to day activities like shopping. After releasing a consumer racial profiling report, the first of its kind in Canada, we began talking to business and affected individuals and are now developing an action plan to continue this important work throughout the year.

Inclusiveness is critical to the health of our citizens and improves all of our economic prospects for the future. We are committed to working with all Nova Scotians to ensure that everyone can participate in and contribute to a prosperous, diverse and inclusive community.

Honourable Lena Metlege Diab
Minister Responsible for the
Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

Tracey L. Williams
Director and CEO
Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

2. Mandate

The NSHRC has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency charged with administering the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, a provincial statute created in 1969, with the most recent amendments in December, 2012. The NSHRC is mandated by the Act to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The specific duties of the NSHRC are set out in the Act. The NSHRC has the responsibility of administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act. In addition it develops programs of public information and education in the field of human rights to forward the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religion, creed, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Furthermore, it is mandated to conduct research and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights.

Additionally the NSHRC co-operates with and assists any person, organization or body concerned with human rights, inside or outside the province.

The NSHRC also works with government by advising and assisting government departments and coordinating their activities as far as these activities concern human rights and advising the government on suggestions, recommendations and requests made by private organizations and individuals. It reports as required by the Minister on the business and activities of the Commission and considers, investigates or administers any matter or activity referred to the Commission by the Governor in Council or the Minister.

Vision

The NSHRC is committed to actively engage and work with all Nova Scotians and our diverse communities to effectively:

- advance equity and dignity,
- foster positive and respectful relations, and
- protect human rights.

The NSHRC believes in and is committed to:

- restorative processes
- respectful and productive relationships
- inclusivity
- service excellence
- continuous learning through research and innovation
- transparency

Strategic Goals

Beginning last year, the NSHRC defined its strategic goals for the ensuing three years. They are as follows:

1. Identify, Address and Operationalize Priority Human Rights Issues

The NSHRC will:

- a. outline a process and criteria for identifying priorities, identify the most important/strategic human rights issues in order to guide the Commission in its work and gain agreement to proceed from the Commissioners;
- b. develop a framework for addressing issues that mitigates all potential for harm and develops restorative responses;
- c. implement systems and structures and put resources in place to address priority issues and furthermore support community capacity to address these issues;
- d. strengthen its capability to respond quickly to critical community situations independent of the Commission's complaint process.

2. Fully Integrate Restorative Approaches Into the Commission's Work

The NSHRC will:

- a. implement a new dispute resolution process and take advantage of the opportunities it provides to strengthen communication, build awareness and raise the profile of the Commission and its restorative approaches;
- b. fully incorporate restorative processes in all that we do by developing a menu of restorative processes and use consistent principles, approaches and experiences.

3. Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices

The NSHRC will:

- a. profile and build upon advancements in human rights work through such strategies as contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues and, in particular, will assess and report on our experience

with the new dispute resolution process and furthermore will prepare to capitalize on the 50 year anniversary of the Commission (2017);

- b. strengthen government and media relations;
- c. encourage the adoption of best human rights practices by adopting the following strategies:
 - i. strengthen connections with all stakeholders such as professionals, volunteers, communities, businesses and organizations involved in human rights work in order to foster a stronger vision, exchange effective approaches and develop new ideas;
 - ii. provide tools, resources, and potentially on-line training, including restorative training for Boards of Inquiry;
 - iii. contribute to a stronger national partnership of Commissions, particularly those Commissions that are sized similarly to that of Nova Scotia;
- d. enhance mechanisms to give voice to people with protected characteristics;
- e. develop and implement a communications strategy.

3. Government Priorities (as appropriate for an independent agency)

The November 2013 Speech from the Throne identified the following government priorities:

1. Consumer-focused energy solutions including a regulated, competitive energy market
2. Prosperous businesses of all sizes - creating jobs across the province
3. Responsible fiscal management
4. Investing in student success with a renewed and strengthened education system
5. Accessible, responsive healthcare
6. Helping all Nova Scotians meet their fullest potential by supporting vulnerable communities – seniors, disabled.

Although it is an independent agency the existence of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission and its mandated work is rooted in legislation. Where possible and appropriate the NSHRC seeks to align its priorities with those of government.

The recent *Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy* has identified, as one of the 12 strategic directions or "game changers", the requirement for Nova Scotia to become a more inclusive and welcoming province. In commenting on this the Commissioners said:

Community leaders must also play a more assertive role in making Nova Scotia a welcoming place for interprovincial migrants and new Canadians and reducing the attitudinal barriers facing First Nations, African Nova Scotians and other disadvantaged groups. (Foreword p. ix)

The NSHRC is committed to continuing its work with our disadvantaged citizens such as those belonging to the First Nations, African Nova Scotian, immigrant and disabled communities in order to protect their right to inherent dignity and equal treatment as members of the human family. This work not only includes engagement with these communities but also extends to all Nova Scotians through outreach and education to promote inclusive and barrier free work places and living spaces.

The NSHRC has embarked on a multi-year engagement strategy concentrating on the African Nova Scotian communities. It is anticipated that as this work matures, it will carry over to other disadvantaged groups who would also benefit from heightened awareness and acceptance within the population at large. The NSHRC will also be introducing a new position in the 2014/15 fiscal year designated as a Mi'kmaq/Aboriginal Officer. Additionally the Commission will continue to work collaboratively with government and other stakeholders such as Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services, the Disabled Persons Commission and Partners for Human

Rights.

Human rights education leads to more inclusive communities, strengthens learning and acceptance, and creates a better workplace culture which, in turn, increases prosperity for all.

4. Performance Measures

Address Priority Human Rights Issues					
OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA Base Year 2011-2012	TARGET March 2015	TRENDS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
Priority human rights issues have been identified, approval obtained from Commissioners and priorities operationalized	Operational planning in place for key human rights activities	Statement of Mandate prepared March 30, 2012 and bi-monthly reports created for Commissioners	Statement of Mandate prepared March 30, 2014 and bi-monthly reports created for Commissioners	N/A	Continue to prepare Statements of Mandate and bi-monthly progress report to Commissioners that identifies current priority human rights issues and implementation time lines.
	Create logic models for planning, implementation and evaluation of key human rights initiatives.	N/A	Logic models created and tabled for Commissioners		Hold planning sessions and seek expert assistance where required

	Status update with respect to each priority identified	N/A	Every 2 months	Every 2 months	• Continue to assign managers and staff to each priority as action items following each Commissioners meeting • Continue to identify appropriate partners and stakeholders for each priority
<i>Integrate Restorative Approaches</i>					
OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA Base Year 2009-2010	TARGET March 2015	TRENDS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
Strengthen communication, build awareness and raise the profile of the Commission and its restorative approaches	Communication Report created identifying and building on prior communication initiatives	Communication Report prepared March 30, 2010	Updated Communication Report prepared by June 1, 2014	N/A	• Identify each of the Commission's strategic priorities • Develop procedures to ensure that major dispute resolution initiatives carry with them a communications component that highlight the restorative/collaborative processes both internally and at Boards of Inquiry

	Status update with respect to each communication initiative	N/A	June 1, 2014	N/A	Assign managers and staff to each communication initiative
Fully incorporate restorative processes where appropriate	All three business units demonstrate application of restorative processes	N/A	September 18, 2014	N/A	• Dispute Resolution unit completes evaluation of i3 programme • RREI unit completes research on restorative activities • Legal unit completes restorative training of Commissioners and board chairs

Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices					
OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA Base Year 2011-2012	TARGET March 2015	TRENDS	STRATEGIC ACTIONS
Position NSHRC at the cutting edge of best human rights practices	Complete restorative training to BOI chairs and report on new advancements created or adopted by NSHRC	N/A	100% of BOI chairs trained by June 1, 2014		• Share/receive information regarding best practices with BOI chairs • Seek amendments to the <i>NS Human Rights Act</i> to support restorative processes • Capture innovative Commission work via polling, academic papers and conferences
Position NSHRC as a national role model in human rights practices	Attend CASHRA conference June 11-12, 2014 in Ottawa, ON	N/A	Report to CASHRA on NSHRC's initiatives June, 2014	N/A	• Work with other human rights agencies, governmental agencies, NGO's and academics to enhance human rights dialogue

5. Budget Context and Budget Budget Context

Budget

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission			
	2013-2014 Estimate (\$ thousands)	2013-2014 Forecast (\$ thousands)	2014-2015 Estimate (\$ thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:	2,449	2,449	2,509
FTE's	23.5	21.1	24.5